

Sharon and Wayne Strong
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SUPPORT for Bill 5357

An Act Concerning a Deaf Child Bill of Rights

To: The Honorable Fleischman, Co-Chair, The Honorable Stillman, Co-Chair, and the members of the Education Committee,

Our names are Sharon and Wayne Strong and we are writing this letter in support of Bill HB 5357, An Act Concerning a Deaf Child Bill of Rights. We are the parents of two profoundly deaf children who are both presently in college. To get them where they are today was a long and difficult process. They both started their early education at CREC Soundbridge and then were mainstreamed to their hometown school for their high school years. When we made the transition to their hometown school, we needed to educate the school on their language and communication needs so that they could learn successfully. Since our children are five years apart in age, our daughter always tells us she was the guinea pig in planning her individual education plan. It was a true learning curve for all of us because there were no road maps or guidelines to follow. It was a trial and error experience because the school system had not dealt with an oral profoundly deaf child in the past and there were no standardized plans. When our son was mainstreamed back to his hometown school, our daughter's experiences had helped pave the way for him, but it still had its own challenges.

Throughout the years we became very educated and involved in what a deaf child requires to succeed in school. Many parents have asked us how our children were able to receive the services they needed from the school system. Our response was that they needed to advocate for their children and make sure that their IEP was language and communication driven. This Bill of Rights will assure parents of deaf and hearing impaired children that their children's language and communication needs will be met, so they can become successful members of society. As parents, our ultimate goal is to have our children become contributing citizens. To do this they need to be guaranteed that they get an education that meets their needs. We urge you to consider supporting this bill on behalf of the deaf and hearing impaired children. Your support of this bill will assure that children who are deaf and hearing impaired will not be left behind.

Thank you for allowing us to present this information to you.